

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 7450

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: ROMULO QUESTIONS MUTUALITY OF DEFENSE TREATY

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN MAY 27 SPEECH TO INFORMATION AND CULTURAL ATTACHES IN MANILA, SEC. ROMULO CONCLUDED THAT MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY WAS FAR FROM BEING MUTUAL AND EXISTS SOLELY FOR PROTECTION OF US FORCES STATIONED IN THE PHILIPPINES. ROMULO BASED HIS JUDGMENT ON INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE IV OF MDA WHICH ALLEGEDLY EMERGED DURING THE SYMINGTON COMMITTEE HEARINGS. REVIEW OF HEARINGS SUGGESTS SUCH INTERPRETATION IMPLAUSIBLE AND IS PRIMARILY DESIGNED JUSTIFY CHANGED GOP ATTITUDE TOWARD MDA. END SUMMARY.

1. IN MAY 27 APPEARANCE BEFORE FOREIGN INFORMATION AND CULTURAL ATTACHES GROUP BILLED IN ADVANCE AS OPPORTUNITY FOR OFF-THE-RECORD, FREE-WHEELING QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION DFA SEC ROMULO ABRUPTLY ANNOUNCED THAT IN VIEW SENSITIVITY OF TOPIC HE WOULD NOT OPEN HIMSELF TO QUESTIONS. INSTEAD HE READ PREPARED SPEECH ON US MILITARY BASES ISSUE, TEXT OF WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED BY DFA.

2. ROMULO'S SPEECH CONSISTS LARGELY OF REHASH OF PREVIOUS PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS ON BASES AND MDA TAKEN BY PRESIDENT
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MARCOS IN HIS UP ALUMNI, CORREGIDOR DAY AND MEMORIAL DAY

SPEECHES (LAST

SPEECH READ BY EXECSEC MELCHOR). ROMULO

ADDED NEW WRINKLE, HOWEVER, BY CLAIMING MDA PUT GOP IN ANOMALOUS POSITION OF DEFENDING US RATHER THAN VICE VERSA. CITING WHAT HE CLAIMED WAS INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE IV OF MDA, WHICH EMERGED DURING SYMINGTON HEARINGS IN OCT. 1969, GEN. ROMULO SAID THAT:

A) US WILL INSTANTLY REPEL ATTACK ON US FORCES IN THE PHILIPPINES

B) US IS NOT REPEAT NOT OBLIGED TO RESPOND IN SAME FASHION IF PHILIPPINES ATTACKED IN WAY WHICH DOES NOT ENDANGER US FORCES IN PHILIPPINES

C) AMERICAN PRESIDENTS CANNOT DIMINISH OR EXCEED CONTENTS OF TREATY. THIS MEANS GUARANTEES OF INSTANT RETALIATION MADE BY PRESIDENTS EISENHOWER AND JOHNSON CANNOT BIND US CONGRESS WHICH ALONE HAS POWER TO DECLAR WAR. FROM THIS INTERPRETATION ROMULO CONCLUDED:

"IN SHORT WE ARE INESCAPABLY LED TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY IS FAR FROM BEING MUTUAL AND THAT IT EXISTS SOLELY FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE U.S. FORCES STATIONED IN THE PHILIPPINES.

THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION CANNOT ESCAPE ANYONE. WE WHO SIGNED THE TREATY IN THE FULL BELIEF THAT IT ENSURES THE PHILIPPINES FROM EXTERNAL AGGRESSION NOW FIND THAT IT IS US, THE SMALL POWER, WHO CONSIDER OURSELVES OBLIGATED TO DEFEND THE BIG POWER..."

3. SEC ROMULO THEN POSED RHETORICAL QUESTION "ARE THEY (BASES) IN THE PRESENT CONTEST (SIC) OF ASIA, A FACTOR FOR INSTABILITY WHICH, INSTEAD OF ADDING TO OUR SECURITY, DIMINISHES IT? "SECRETARY ENDED HIS PRESENTATION BY MAKING CASE FOR REASSESSMENT IN INTERESTS BOTH COUNTRIES ADDING CAVEATS THAT "PRES. MARCOS VIEWS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (READ PRIVATE INVESTMENT) AS ONE OF THE HIGHEST OF OUR NATIONAL OBJECTIVES" AND THAT "WE SHALL UNDERTAKE OUR REASSESSMENT IN THE FRIENDLIEST SPIRIT AND IN FULL APPRECIATION OF EACH OTHER'S INTERESTS IN THIS HOUR OF TRIAL".

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4. EXPRESS EDITORIAL OF MAY 29 STATED ROMULO HAD "DEBUNKED" GENERAL IMPRESSION OF TREATY, I.E., THAT IT WAS GENUINE MUTUAL DEFENSE PACT AND COMMENTED ROMULO SPEECH UNDERScoreD NEED TO REVIEW PACT. EDITORIALIST ARGUED THIS WAS ANOTHER REASON FOR FILIPINOS AS PEOPLE TO STAND FOUR SQUARE BEHIND THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ITS EFFORTS TO HAVE A MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY "THAT IS REALLY MUTUAL".

5. COMMENT. SEC. ROMULO WAS OBVIOUSLY WARY OF GETTING TOO FAR OUT IN FRONT OF PRESIDENT ON MILITARY BASES ISSUE. HE WAS EQUALLY ANXIOUS AVOID QUESTIONING ABOUT FUTURE WHICH MIGHT HAVE THAT EFFECT OR, MORE LIKELY, POSE QUESTIONS HE WAS NOT ABLE TO ANSWER. HIS UNEXPECTED CHANGE IN FORMAT AND CONCENTRATION ON US BASES TO EXCLUSION OTHER QUESTIONS WAS DISTINCT SURPRISE TO MULTI-NATIONAL GROUP OF ATTACHES PRESENT. PERHAPS NOT AS SURPRISING, GIVEN CURRENT TRENDS IN US-GOP RELATIONS, WAS ROMULO'S SELECTIVE READING OF SYMINGTON HEARINGS AND DECISION EXTRAPOLATE FROM THEM INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE IV MDA WHICH AT CONSIDERABLE VARIANCE WITH OFFICIAL USG EXPLICATION OF ARTICLE IV AS PRESENTED PAGES 348-49 THOSE HEARINGS.
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